



# TASMANIAN BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

## NEWSLETTER

Vol., 20 No. 3

1st November 2011

### GUARDIAN OF THE GOLDEN NECTAR

#### Honey industry leader in the running for biosecurity award

Lindsay Bourke, Tasmania's biggest beekeeper, is on a mission to keep Australia's honey the best-tasting, purest and safest in the world. The owner of Australian Honey Products manages 3000 hives and produces 250 tonnes of honey every year, a large portion of it organic.



His bees pollinate 80 crops of fruit and vegetables, and his multi award-winning honey is processed and extracted in a Launceston heritage building which once housed a maternity hospital. But it is for his implementation of best practice biosecurity measures to ensure food safety that Mr Bourke has made the shortlist for the prestigious Biosecurity Farmer of the Year award.

Ten years ago, Mr Bourke supported a group of concerned apiarists who established B-QUAL – a national, independently audited food safety accreditation system for the honey industry. “The requirements of the yearly assessment and certification for B-QUAL are stringent,” Mr Bourke says. “You have to have the records to identify where the honey was collected from and the history of the bees that produced it.”

Ninety percent of Australia's honey is now extracted under the strict food hygiene conditions of B-QUAL and Lindsay Bourke would like to see every beekeeper participate. “There are over 1800 larger beekeepers in Australia who produce most of the honey,” he says. “But there are more than 8000 small beekeepers, many with just a few hives, who sell at farmers' markets and such places. We're trying to get as many of them as we can into B-QUAL because they have to understand that honey is a food, which has to be produced under strict extraction procedures.”

Duncan Rowland, Manager of Biosecurity Planning and Implementation at Animal Health Australia, said Lindsay Bourke is one of the rare breed of individuals who demonstrates a deep commitment to biosecurity for both his business and the industry as a whole. “B-QUAL covers biosecurity best practice for tracing, training and hygiene, and has allowed Lindsay's company to export honey all over the world,” Mr Rowland said. “The judges were particularly impressed with the way he has pioneered high-level biosecurity standards among his fellow producers and worked hard to keep our bees safe from biosecurity threats.”

Lindsay Bourke has been at the forefront of protecting Australian bees from the many threats lurking just beyond our borders, first as Quarantine and Disease Chairman, then Chairman of the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council for the past seven years. “We are the most threatened agricultural industry in Australia, with no less than twenty separate threats to the survival of Australia's European bees,” he says.

These days, what keeps him awake at night is the Asian bee, already established in north Queensland; and especially the destructive mites it is capable of carrying – the Varroa destructor and the Varroa jacobsoni.

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“At the moment, Australia is still a honey paradise. We are the last country in the world that doesn't have Varroa destructor,” Mr Bourke says. Honey as an industry is only worth about \$80 million a year, but our bees directly pollinate an estimated \$4 billion of crops. Some, like apples, pears, cherries and almonds, would be lost without the bees.”

Varroa mites, tiny parasites which feed off honeybee larvae, have destroyed the European bee populations of Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. “No country that has become infected with Varroa destructor has been able to stop its spread,” Mr Bourke adds.

He is championing the extension of a number of quarantine and surveillance programs aimed at containing the spread of the Asian bee and keeping Varroa mites out of Australia. “There was a little bloke called Einstein, and he was pretty good with maths. He worked out that four or five years after the last bee dies so will the last of mankind... And we have so many more people to feed today!”

Hosted by Kondinin Group and ABC Rural, and sponsored by Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia, the Biosecurity Farmer of the Year award recognises the efforts of producers dedicated to keeping their operations free of diseases, pests and weeds. Winners of all categories in the Australian Farmer of the Year Awards will be announced at a ceremony in Sydney on 7 September.

*Farm Biosecurity 30 August 2011*

### **TBA Inc NEWS**

**The AGM and AHBIC AGM will be held on the 5 & 6th July, 2012 at the Colonial Inn, Corner George & Elizabeth Street, Launceston.**

**Please book accommodation yourself on 03 63316588 and explain it is the for conference to receive the special rate of \$120 per night.**

### **SOUTHERN BRANCH**

Meetings have been well attended with a number of new younger people wishing to be Beekeepers and gaining knowledge from the older ones.

Our AGM was so well attended that some folk had to stand. As Secretary I sent out notices of the AGM and also some changes to the Constitution which needed to be put right. These changes were passed which makes the job of Chairperson and Secretary so much easier

We have had talks by the older more experienced Beekeepers on such subjects as "Wintering your Hive", "Swarm Control", "How to produce Honey for Showing" and at our next meeting we are having a talk on "Bee diseases" and this all being well will be a power point presentation.

In November we will be holding our usual 'Barbecue' with a talk and demonstrations showing new and not so new members on how to raise Queens. This is usually a very interesting and instructive day out.

With the warmer weather coming we are now in the process of Swarm collection with a number of members willing to do this job.

This coming week is the Royal Hobart Show and again we are putting on a demonstration with a Bee Cage and a display of products that the bees have some or all input into such as polish soap chocolate candles and some beauty product as well of course Honey.

*Jill Davey*  
Secretary.

## NORTHERN BRANCH

We held our Mini Field Day on the 24<sup>th</sup> September and were a great success. Members shared their knowledge about hive manipulation, box and frame construction and painting of boxes. Members say group discussion is a good way of sharing knowledge. After lunch we went and looked at the bees and put into practice the discussions before lunch. The guest speaker for the day was Craig Hazeldene from Wes Farmers Insurance who gave a very informative talk on public liability, general property damage, small and recreational beekeepers how important adequate cover is if ever a claim is made.

Now the show season has arrived and the Public Liability Insurance sorted out the branch set up the Bee

cage at Launceston and Longford shows. The weather was not all that kind to us and once the smoker was lit and the sun came out the presentation went very well. We had interest from 12 people about the Basic Beekeeping Course we intend running early next year.

The Branch is having the December meeting as a combined Xmas dinner meeting and all TBA and Branch members are welcome.

*Ray Edwards*  
Secretary

## MURCHISON LEATHERWOOD COMMITTEE

The next Murchison Leatherwood Committee meeting is to be held on the 5th December, 2011 at Forestry Tasmania, Camdale. Bill Oosting is still President. The new Guidelines have been finished and approved which state all request for site matters must be submitted in writing for Forestry Tasmania at least one month prior to the meetings.

Maxine Ewington

Secretary

Tasmanian Beekeepers' Association Inc.

## NEW SECRETARIES AND EMAIL ADDRESSES

The **NORTH WEST BRANCH** have advised that they now have a new Secretary. He is Steve Bush, PO Box 123, Somerset 7322, Phone 0407 047 904. His, and the Branches email address, is Email [northwest\\_tba@live.com.au](mailto:northwest_tba@live.com.au). Please note that there is an underscore '\_', not a blank, between northwest and tba.

The **NEW SOUTH WALES APIARISTS** also has a new mail and email address which is as follows: The Secretary, PO Box 649, GLENN INNES, NSW 2370 and email: [nswapiaristsassociation@gmail.com](mailto:nswapiaristsassociation@gmail.com)

## APIS CERANA

Trevor Weatherhead reports that some 40 incidents of *A cerana* have been discovered and eradicated in the last 8 weeks till 21st October. They consisted of 24 nests and 16 swarms.

Thursday's meeting (7 October) was the last for the Co-ordination Group. Its place is to be taken by a Management Group which will have representatives from only those who are contributing financially. So the group will only have representatives from the Federal Government, the Queensland Government, the beekeeping industry and Plant Health Australia as PHA is managing the money on behalf of the Federal Government. It would seem that no other body is putting any money into the program. However if they choose to do so then they can have a say.

This past week (21 October) has been very wet. Babinda had 654mm and Cairns had 420mm of rain. Is it an early start to the wet season or just unseasonal rain? Opinion seems to be divided. However it did curtail operations in the area.

The bee eater roosts are being monitored and the pellets collected have been negative for *Apis cerana* for Etty Bay, near Innisfail, Clifton Beach and Atherton. There were positives for Kewarra Beach and Kuranda. New roosts have been located in the Port Douglas area, to the north, which is well outside the RA so will provide useful data.

So far 56 volunteers have been to Cairns. Thank you to those who have volunteered.

## AHBIC PERFORMING FOR BEEKEEPERS

With reference to the recent article in the NSWAA Honeybee News by Bill Weiss, the statement that "AHBIC is being run by some of the packers", is nonsense if he refers to Capilano's position.

A democratic process exists whereby many other votes outnumber Capilano's in any vote at AHBIC. Beekeeper organisations have the majority of votes.

Bill Weiss's response to the vote by his peers is to blame some sort of seismic shift in culture as the reason for the vote. Perhaps the result reflects what the majority wanted.

Unsupported allegations of the type in Bill's letter lack credibility.

It is evident Bill didn't like the result and proposes a new body to skirt around the debate and outcome of a vote that happens in a democratic process.

*Roger Masters*

Capilano Honey Limited

## HONEY CONTAINING GM POLLEN MUST GET EU APPROVAL

*(Brussels, 6 September 2001 (Reuters))*

Honey containing even small traces of pollen from genetically modified (GM) plants must receive prior EU authorisation before it can be sold as food, Europe's highest court said today.

The ruling could open the way for compensation claims by beekeepers against biotech companies such as Monsanto, and EU authorities said it could hit European imports of honey from countries where GM crops are widely grown.

The case was brought by German beekeepers from Bavaria, who in 2005 found their honey contained traces of pollen from insect-resistant GM maize (com) plants developed by Monsanto, which were being grown for research purposes near their hives.

The beekeepers said the presence of pollen from GM plants in their honey made the product unsuitable for sale and consumption, and brought legal action against the Bavarian authorities which authorised the field trials of GM maize.

"Products such as honey containing such pollen constitute foodstuffs which contain ingredients produced from GMOs," the European Court of Justice said in a statement.

"The pollen in question consequently comes within the scope of the (EU) regulation and must be subject to the authorisation scheme provided for there under before being placed on the market," the statement said.

Environmental campaigners said the ruling proved that GM and non-GM agriculture could not coexist in Europe, and that the European Commission should reverse its recent decision to allow traces of unapproved GM material in feed imports to the bloc.

"Monsanto and the Bavarian state that grew the crop should be held fully liable for this genetic pollution and compensate any beekeeper affected," Greenpeace EU agriculture policy adviser Stefanie Hundsdorfer said in a statement.

A spokesman for Monsanto refused to comment on the specifics of the case, but said there were no safety concerns with its MON810 maize.

"This case is about the legal technicalities of the EU approvals of MON810. The safety of MON810 is confirmed by multiple regulatory approvals, including those in the EU, and by up to 15 years of successful commercial use and consumption," the spokesman said.

A spokesman for the Commission said the EU executive was still studying the ruling, but that it could have an impact on imports of honey from countries such as Argentina, where GM crops are widely grown.

Imports accounted for 40 percent of EU honey consumption in 2007, and were worth a total of 375 million Euros (\$528.4 million), the Confederation of British Industry said in a 2009 report.

At a recent AHBIC EXECUTIVE MEETING, the EUROPEAN SITUATION REGARDING GMO POLLEN IN HONEY was discussed. A recent court case in the European Union (EU) has put in doubt the requirements for exporting honey from where GMO crops are grown to EU.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) are concerned as to what the court decision means and that the European Commission would be required to respond to the judgement shortly so that the EU could make a decision. USA and Canadian honey may be more seriously impacted due to some of their crops not being EU authorised GM crops. It is unclear whether the GM decision is a breach of the World Trade Organisation.

The decision needs to be understood from an Australian point of view particularly given the proposed increase in GMO crop plantings.

**FUNNY JELLY NETS FINE**

A New Zealand company that imported Chinese powdered royal jelly and sold it in capsules claiming it was 'Made in New Zealand' has been fined NZ\$11,400.

Honey New Zealand (International) Ltd admitted two charges of breaching the Fair Trading Act in relation to the marketing and distribution of the royal jelly capsules through stores in Auckland and Christchurch. The Commerce Commission withdrew a third charge that the royal jelly was not of the potency claimed.

The Commission says Honey New Zealand arranged for Chinese powdered royal jelly to be mixed with white beeswax and inserted it into capsules. The product was labelled as Made in New Zealand, carried an image of the New Zealand fern and a statement, "Honey NZ has over a 90 year history working with premium honey bee products gathered from the heart of untouched native forest and wild field areas of New

Zealand."

A commission statement says in fact the only part of the product that was genuinely from New Zealand was the white beeswax the royal jelly was mixed with and the water in the capsule shell. Honey New Zealand admitted that six out of eight of the raw materials in its royal jelly were sourced from overseas.

In the judgement, Judge Allison Sinclair said "in my view the statements made on the label departed significantly from the truth." She commented further, "the label led consumers to believe they were buying a superior New Zealand made product when in fact they were not."

Once caught, Honey New Zealand stopped distributing the royal jelly product and relabelled its products.

**HEALTHY HONEY**

Honey from the Australian native myrtle tree has been found to have the most powerful antibacterial properties of any honey in the world.

Queensland health experts are now considering using it to treat bacterial infections, such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), that often occur in hospitals and nursing homes. MRSA can be difficult to treat because new strains keep emerging that are resistant to existing antibiotics.

In tests, researchers at the University of Queensland

and the Department of Economic Development & Innovation discovered the native myrtle tree honey has high levels of a key bacteria-fighting compound.

"The sheer strength, due to high levels of active compounds, in these honeys, has meant we have been able to completely inhibit MRSA with a relatively small quantity of honey," says Chief Researcher, Dr Yasmina Sultanbawa. "This could provide enormous benefits to MRSA patients."

## NO NEED FOR PLAN BEE

(DAFF Biosecurity Bulletin Winter 2011)

Stevedores at the Port of Brisbane felt a buzz in the air while unloading vehicles from Thailand. The stevedores discovered a nest of over 2000 exotic red dwarf honey bees in the wheel arch of a Toyota Hilux.

Australia quarantine officers arrived on the scene to supervise the treatment of the area with insecticide. The bees, native to south eastern Asia, were not carrying any harmful parasitic mites that could damage Australia's honey bee industry. No other live insects were found.

Following inspection, the remaining 990 cars were released from quarantine. Operational Science Program officers are confident no bees escaped the enclosed area.

## FUTURE POST-ENTRY QUARANTINE 'SUPER STATION'

On 5 August 2011 the General Manager, Operational Resourcing & Infrastructure Quarantine Operations Division of DAFF announced that five quarantine stations for livestock, bees, birds, domestic pets and plants will be consolidated at a single site in Victoria.

The new site, which will cost more than \$30 million, will replace existing facilities at Eastern Creek in Sydney, Spotswood and Knoxfield in Melbourne, Byford in Perth and Torrens Island in Port Adelaide.

The Government has not disclosed the location due to procurement confidentiality reasons.

According to a site plan on the department's website, the new facility will include 80 horse stables, 240 cat

enclosures, 400 dog kennels, six bee flight rooms, the capacity to house 2000 caged birds, two greenhouses and laboratories for imported plants, and a 1200sqm cattle shed.

The plan to replace five stations with one 'super station' has met with criticism from some quarters of industry, with calls made to at least establish a tropical quarantine facility in addition to the planned temperate climate facility.

## IN OHIO WITH CHARLES

I took a bus from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Mansfield in Ohio to meet up with a recreational beekeeper. When the bus arrived at the Mansfield depot I was the only descending passenger to rescue a massive rucksack from the luggage compartment which probably identified me as the stranger who had been hiking the Appalachian Trail.



Charles and Edith lived a few miles out of Mansfield on a 40 acre lot. Half pasture and half woodland it overlooked a valley at the bottom of which ran a newly constructed six-lane highway. Their house had been built some thirty years before using timber from the oak and maple trees on their land. The basswood [Tilia

Americana] that grew in profusion on the property had been encouraged as a source of honey.

Ohio is the home state of the A.I. Root Company and of the new age of beekeeping that began in the late 1800s. My hosts arranged a trip to Medina and to the A.I. Root beekeeping equipment store, an eye opener to say the least. We spent a

couple of hours going through all the beekeeping equipment on display. Another vast store of motorised machinery where light aircraft were on show prompted the suggestion that, with the correct pilot's licence, I could island hop back to Tasmania with a load of new bee gear.

Indiana to the west was home to long time friends, commercial beekeepers with several thousand hives. It was a day of education for me, this hi-tech; US style migratory beekeeping of the 1980s. Moving semi-trailer loads of palletised bees into the Dakotas for both pollination jobs and honey production was all non-stop movement. With an outside temperature well in the thirties and an 80 percent humidity to match, a couple of hours over lunch in a fully air-conditioned house were a welcome interlude to the bee-filled air of commercial beekeeping.

A retired teacher, Charles visited many schools in the county to present slide shows of bees and honey. He had a way of communicating with students and it was worth the time to accompany him on a couple of visits to primary schools. The local radio station ran a daily talk-back programme, completely ad-lib. It was against my better judgment that I volunteered to present a picture in words of beekeeping in Tasmania. The volley of questions from listeners was a trifle more than daunting. As Charles was a regular presenter at the daily programme he set a difficult standard to match in the quality of presentation.

Being introduced as an Appalachian Trail hiker and a beekeeper from the island state of Tasmania, now visiting the state of Ohio was only the beginning. Occasionally the Tasmanian devil got in the way of conversation, as did the koala. Australia at that time was still the land of salt water crocodiles, koalas, devils and tiger snakes. Trying to project a picture of Tasmania's west coast predominant eucalyptus species interspersed with survivors of the Gondwanaland times such as leatherwood was more than a problem. There is nothing in the northern hemisphere that quite resembles a wet sclerophyll or rain forest in Tasmania.

I left the radio station with a taped record of the programme that, when played back, still induces shudders at some of the verbal mistakes I made in front of that particular microphone.

All good things eventually come to an end and I finally boarded a bus to Washington DC to catch a flight to Los Angeles and the long trip back to Tasmania.

*Norman Hoyle*

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